



Managing GOD's Money

Theme for Month: Goals and Plans

A New Year on the horizon; time for a fresh start! Do you want to start the year understanding what you should be doing and where you should be going? Better still, do you want to learn where God is working in your life, or where He wants you to be during the New Year?

This month, let's explore the Bible to answer these questions about goal setting and planning under God's direction. We will cover these topics:

- *December 1-7: A Life Goal: Why am I here?*
- *December 8-14: His Goal or Mine: Why not mine?*
- *December 15-21: Smoothing Peaks and Troughs: Targeted Savings?*
- *December 22-25: God's Perfect Plan: Available to me?*
- *December 26-31: Where is God: Where is my plan?*

Topic for the Week: Smoothing Peaks and Troughs: Targeted Savings?

December 15-21

The Word



Genesis 41:47-49

During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully.

Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

This account is so relevant to modern day society. Usually many economies experience "bubble" periods that produce great excesses, followed by recessions when the "bubble" bursts, producing wide spread suffering resulting from overindulgence.

The size of surpluses accessible to each person during the "bubble" is debatable. But considering **2 Kings 4:1-7** and **Matthew 6:33**, most people get access to extra wealth during boom periods. Sadly, they don't save a part of the increase nor assign it to God's Kingdom. Rather, they use these excesses to try to get even "more"! But because they never know when the "bubble" will burst, many folks enter the recession with huge debt loads that they carry to the next up-cycle.

Here is the context for **Genesis 41:47-49**: God interprets Pharaoh's dream through Joseph. Through the dreams, God tells Pharaoh there would be seven years of feasts, followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh believes, and appoints Joseph as Governor of Egypt. Joseph's life so far displayed obedience to God wherever He placed him.

Joseph accepted the task, the outcome of which would point the world to God and glorify Him. He developed and carried out a "targeted savings plan" to store food during the feast, for distribution during the famine.

We can take several important lessons from this fourteen-year period; here are three.

1. Joseph rose above his earlier unfair treatment and chose not to be a victim or to be vindictive. He had the "perfect qualifications" to host pity parties, be vindictive, and wallow in his circumstances, but he

didn't. He worked unto the Lord (**Colossians 3:23**).

a. Recall His brothers had thrown him "into the cistern", then sold him into slavery. (**Genesis 37:23-28**). His "master took him and put him in prison" based on a false accusation (**Genesis 39:7-20**). Still He focused on the Lord.

2. Pharaoh didn't intimidate Joseph, whose faith was strong. Joseph recognized God's control and realized God uses us where He puts us even if it may be unpleasant. Further, God allows the "unpleasantness" as part of our training for His future assignments. Joseph was merely the instrument God used to interpret Pharaoh's dream:

a. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." **Genesis 41:15-16**.

3. Joseph trusted God

a. Even though the seven-year period produced grain "beyond measure", he did not move away from God's plan for the surplus;

didn't speculate on God's timing to end the feast, but continued to store surplus food, under God's direction.

How else could Joseph have reacted? We should remember that when Joseph carried out the plan he did not have the benefit of hindsight. He could have doubted God and stop storing surplus because of the vastness!

Joseph was similar to Noah! In retrospect, it is obvious Noah had to build the ark! But he and Joseph had to carry out God's plans over long periods when human knowledge would question what they were doing. **In both instances, the goals were the same: obedience to God.**

Noah and his compatriots had no idea of rain, yet he had to build this huge object in the open where others could see and ridicule him! So too, Joseph continued to have faith in God and stored surplus grain even though it was so much it was beyond measurement! The common attitude they displayed is their steadfastness—they showed unwavering confidence and trust in their God!

They obeyed Him. They didn't use human logic: Why continue storing grain when the land was producing grain beyond measurement! Why build an ark when there was no physical sign it would be necessary?

Though I have these and other similar biblical accounts, I continue to argue, negotiate, and speculate about God's specific goals and plans that He gives me! Do you relate to this?

How do you define excess? Can you identify excess wealth or possessions that come your way? More to the point, do you believe you ever get excess? How do you normally handle them? Do you listen to hear if God wants you to plan for that predicable "famine" or downturn? Do you listen to Him to hear if He wants you to give your excess to His Kingdom? Do you understand that if God cannot trust you with a little He cannot trust you with a lot (**Luke 16:10-12**)?

These days we want more continually, a mind-set that doesn't allow us to see our plenty. If we take the results of past economic expansions, a typical response is the opposite to Joseph's—over commitment, major risk-taking, and assumption of significant debt: we don't seek the Lord and follow His goals and plans! We overindulge and sink deep in debt, depression, and frustration!

The answer to coping with possessions God gives us is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He is calling you! Ask Him to help you to hear His voice. Scripture shows He uses ordinary people to do the extraordinary: David, Gideon, Esther are but a few.

Application

Psalm 11:14

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them.

Take a few moments to reflect on these issues:

- Has God given you specific goals that seem illogical in human terms?
- Do you realize when God gives you a goal He gives the plan and everything you need to reach it?
- Are you struggling with finishing a project for which you can't see all the needed skills, finances, and materials?
- God will not give you everything in advance, only when you need them. This is where you must exercise faith and act on the unseen.
- Are you wrestling with God over something you are doing that He is asking you to give up?
- Give it up! God wants the best for believers; that's His nature.
- Today, are you going through excess or famine? Ask God to show you how to work where you are, with what you have.
- Though we may think we don't have enough, He has promised to provide for our needs. Ask Him to show you lessons to learn where you are.

Invest time this week to ask God to confirm His goals for you. Pray; fast, as you

seek His direction, but don't rationalize inaction because you can't see the big picture. Leave that view to God; take care of the issues that He has given to you.

In **Luke 17:6**, Jesus said, ... "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

Have you ever seen a mustard seed? Carry one; better still, carry several with you always!

Considering this month's theme, *Goals and Plans*, this period's topic, *Smoothing Peaks and Troughs: Targeted Savings*, each day reflect on the verses on page three. These questions might help your reflection:

- ★ Who is talking to whom, about what, and in what context?
- ★ How do these verses apply to me today?
- ★ What can I start today?

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Memory Verse

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. --- 1 Corinthians 15:58

P e r s o n a l R e f l e c t i o n s

December 15th: Genesis 41:15-16; Genesis 41:47-49

D e c e m b e r 16th - 2 Kings 4:1-7; Matthew 6:24-33

D e c e m b e r 17th - Genesis 37:23-24; Genesis 39:7-20

D e c e m b e r 18th - Luke 16:10-13

D e c e m b e r 19th - 1 Corinthians 15:58

D e c e m b e r 20th - Luke 17:6

D e c e m b e r 21st - Colossians 3:23